



'The Anzac Memorial: "In Lonely Contemplation Bowed". The Brooding Figures on the Buttresses.'  
Anzac Memorial, Hyde Park. Sydney Mail, 7 Nov 1934.

BOOROWA PRODUCTIONS

## CHAPTER 53

# ARCHITECTURE

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THE LITERATURE on architecture in Australia is largely a collection of books illustrating and documenting old buildings and historic places. This kind of publishing has enjoyed a phenomenal growth over the past twenty years and it is now possible, in a way which earlier was quite out of the question, to become informed about Australia's architectural past. There are overall surveys and surveys of the major periods and styles; there are books about the main kinds of building types—domestic, public, religious and rural; there are a few biographies of architects, and one book about building contractors.

Treatment of the present, of new or recent buildings and of living architects is still, by comparison, uncommon, though the drought may be breaking with a growing number of books on contemporary Australian architecture, including J. Taylor's *Australian architecture since 1960* (Sydney, Law Book Co, 1986). In the last few decades, the one writer who belied the generalisation was Robin Boyd. Boyd is probably still the best-known author on Australian architecture. He was certainly the best known when at the height of his output in the late 1960s. His incisive writing, popular with both a wide public and a professional readership, was concerned above all with contemporary events. His one history (1952; repr 1968) is in reality a pedigree of the suburban house and milieu, which Boyd regarded with a vehement combination of love and hate. As history that book has some important gaps, one being the omission of terrace houses, another that it is all too obviously a Melbourne account rather than a national one. As a combination of acute visual observations and witty social commentary it stands alone.

The historical literature is still largely a matter of illustration and documentation rather than discussion and illumination. Secondly, and this is partly a consequence of the first point, it is focused very much upon buildings and places rather than upon people. The lack of biographical work and social commentary is in a way surprising because one of the earliest books was biographical (Ellis, 1949; repr, 1978) but only a few have followed its example. There are experienced biographers and a great deal of amateur local interest in people's careers, yet architects, builders and building tradesmen have received scant attention. The place one can turn to, however, is the still growing *Australian dictionary of biography* with companion use of the aid provided by J.G. Marshall and R.C.S Trahair: *Occupational index to the ADB* (Bundoora, Vic, La Trobe University, Dept of Sociology, 1979–85). In that index the obviously relevant categories are Architect, Builder, Contractor, Engineer and Surveyor.

The illustrative works that are the core of the literature are in some cases quite splendidly



equipped. The grandfather volume is Hardy Wilson (1924; facs, 1975), and its plates are so admired that the fate of many copies in that limited edition has been dismemberment and framing for wall display. Morton Herman's first book (1954; repr, 1970) was illustrated with his own drawings, very colourful perspectives and carefully measured plans and details. Among the ever-expanding number of books illustrated with photography, that by the Sydney photographer Max Dupain (1973) surely stands out. His dramatic black and white photos are made bold beyond nature by his use of orange and red filters, and they have infused the literature with a sparkling quality. Other photographers have become prominent over the same period, including Douglass Baglin, Wesley Stacey and Richard Stringer.

The explanations for the shortcomings in the literature on architecture in Australia are also the explanations for its strengths. In a relatively short time, about twenty years, the quantity of publications has grown phenomenally and the subjects covered have broadened considerably, although they almost all look backward. The explanations lie in the growth of the conservation movement. Should it be called the 'urban conservation' movement? That title is usefully brief, but misleading because a great many rural and isolated examples have received attention. A more helpful description is 'conservation of the built environment'. The chief agents of the movement have been, and in many ways still are, the National Trusts. The first National Trust was formed in New South Wales in 1945, incorporated in 1950. Others followed, until by 1963 one existed in each state and now there is also one in the Northern Territory. Most of the Trusts have produced books, and a federation of National Trusts has publication as its major function.

Other important sources for architectural compendia are the government agencies which have been formed as a product of the conservation movement. The extensive work of government departments concerned with the environment at federal, state and local levels will undoubtedly lead the field as far as documentation is concerned. The 'listings' which are usually at the heart of these government operations provide a golden opportunity for such books, as demonstrated by the massive Australian Heritage Commission publication (1981).

The National Trusts have produced or inspired much of the extensive illustrative and documentary work, but notable contributions have also been made by individual writers. Some preceded Trust activities. Sydney architect Morton Herman's publication (1954; repr, 1970) became virtually the sole Australian text for some years. *Early Melbourne buildings* by Maie Casey and five other contributors (1953; repr, OUP, 1975) was the starting point for the National Trust in Victoria, being adopted almost wholly as its first listing of buildings for conservation. The same happened in Tasmania with M. Sharland (1952).

In his turn the most substantial writer from a historical perspective became J.M. Freeland. His history (1972) is to date the only comprehensive single work, and a very useful and reliable one. As an introduction, as a reference work and as a student text, it is likely to continue unchallenged for some time yet. Freeland was also responsible for turning attention to a period and a person outside the ever-popular colonial, namely Horbury Hunt (1836–1904). His book on Hunt (1970) is also significant in being one of the few biographies of Australian architects. Freeland had an influence upon architectural history in Australia beyond his own writing. For many years he taught and directed research into architectural history at the University of New South Wales School of Architecture.

After Boyd, Herman and Freeland one earlier name has great significance, that of Hardy Wilson. His book (1924; facs, 1975) is the first about old Australian buildings, and it remains to this day the most splendid publication. Its text is short, with the clear message that great beauty worthy of profound attention was lying uncelebrated, in some cases neglected and derelict. The original edition is a collector's item, but a reduced size facsimile is readily available. Wilson also produced other books, with more in the way of text. They are intriguing and eccentric volumes.

Singling out more names becomes a little hazardous because the list will rapidly grow and the reader may be better advised to turn to the reading list which follows. Nevertheless attention is drawn to a few writers for reasons which will be given.

Philip Cox has been involved in what amounts almost to a publishing campaign rather than



an author's career. He is a busy, award-winning Sydney architect with an earnest desire for Australian-ness in the contemporary work of his own office and others. He wishes especially to draw attention to the vernacular work of Australia's past. In association with photographer Wesley Stacey, with the help of several co-authors, and by using his architectural office as a kind of publishing agency, he has been responsible for no less than nine books in fourteen years.

Jennifer Taylor, of Sydney University, stands somewhat apart because of her concentration upon recent work and living architects. She produced a small publication (1972) with significant commentary upon the so-called Sydney School of the 1960s and also worked with John Andrews, a leading international architect, to produce a book about his work (1982).

Donald Leslie Johnson is an academic at Flinders University of South Australia who has worked steadily at a series of topics which are Australian or related to Australia. His most sustained research has been on Walter Burley Griffin, about whom he is clearly the authority. Along the way he provided a bibliographic guide which can be the starting point for anyone wishing to join him in looking closely at Griffin (1980).

Gordon Young, of the South Australian Institute of Technology (School of Architecture) has directed over many years an important survey of those towns and buildings in the Adelaide Hills which exhibit special connections with their early settlers' regions of origin: German and English. The reports so far published are *Hahndorf* in two volumes (both 1981) and *Lobethal* (1983).

One of the volumes in the sesquicentenary history of Western Australia contains the definitive work by Margaret Pitt Morison and John White of the University of Western Australia (1979).

Other academics have covered considerable research ground but are not necessarily found as authors of books. As by-products of their work, or to meet the needs of their students, various research aids have been distributed among libraries and interested researchers. Three valuable examples are Donald Johnson's *18th and 19th century architecture books and serials in South Australia* (Adelaide, LBSA, 1981); David Saunders' *Architectural history, domestic architecture: a bibliography from Melbourne and Sydney libraries* (Sydney, Power Institute, 1969); and Helen Temple and David Saunders' *Architectural history in Australia: a bibliography of twentieth century publications* (Adelaide, University of Adelaide, 1977).

For those aspects of architecture that have not yet received their fair share of attention, the reader might take note of three journals. Devoted principally to recent and current affairs is the monthly journal of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA), *Architecture Australia*. Others have come and gone over the years, but since 1950 this journal has illustrated and (to a limited extent) discussed the works of contemporary Australians. A small number of articles on architecture were contributed to the long-running periodical *Art in Australia*; on occasions it has contained celebrated material such as the 1919 special number 'Domestic architecture in Australia', an issue in which Hardy Wilson assisted. The third journal is especially designed to record and discuss historical issues in Australian architecture: *Heritage Australia* is sponsored by the Australian Council of National Trusts and contains well-informed articles, most of which are also well illustrated.

A series of monographs on living Australian architects was begun by the RAIA in 1984, with the initial one devoted to Philip Cox.

The Adelaide publisher Rigby has issued during the past few years a charming and by now very extensive series of small *Sketchbooks*—joint products of an artist and a writer—illustrating the buildings of Australian towns and suburbs.

The literature on architecture in Australia held only a few pioneer works until after World War II, but the years since then have seen quite a respectable array emerge, devoted to historical matters above all and generally characterised by an encyclopaedic and illustrative approach. Reflection, explanation and analysis are not yet strong, and recent architecture is mostly left to the profession's magazine.





AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF NATIONAL TRUSTS. *Historic Buildings of Australia*. Melbourne, Cassell, 1969–76. 6 vols, illus.

This well-illustrated series describes celebrated homes, houses and whole urban areas demonstrating the variety of Australia's colonial environments. Each volume has a separate title.

AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION. *The heritage of Australia: the illustrated register of the National Estate*. Melbourne, Macmillan in association with the Australian Heritage Commission, 1981. 1164 p, illus, maps.

An invaluable illustrated encyclopaedia of the National Estate.

BERRY, D.W. AND GILBERT, S.H. *Pioneer building techniques in South Australia*. Adelaide, Gilbert-Partners, 1981. 104 p, illus.

Few publications have as yet addressed themselves to Australian vernacular architecture. The cases illustrated here are sensibly discussed.

BOYD, R. *The Australian ugliness*. Ringwood, Vic, Penguin in association with Cheshire, 1968. 256 p, illus.

This book, first published in 1961, had a powerful impact in its day. Boyd, as architectural critic and social commentator, is at his liveliest here. His barbed characterisations of the Australian environment had a forceful effect.

BOYD, R. *Australia's home: its origins, builders and occupiers*. Ringwood, Vic, Penguin, 1968. 316 p, illus.

A critical and historical view of Australian suburbia. It documents the plans, the images and the fittings of characteristic houses throughout Australia's history. The observations are acute and witty. First published in 1952.

BOYD, R. *Living in Australia*. Sydney, Pergamon, 1970. 154 p, illus.

The book of Boyd's own architecture, arranged to suit the thematic explanation Boyd offers for his work.

BROADBENT, J. *The golden decade of Australian architecture: the work of John Verge*. Sydney, David Ell Press in association with the Elizabeth Bay House Trust, 1978. 128 p, illus.

John Verge has been brought nearer to the prominence he deserves, with new insights from recent re-examination of his surviving works. It includes essays by Ian Evans and Clive Lucas. (See also W.G. Verge, 1962.)

BURCHELL, L.E. *Victorian schools: a study in colonial government architecture, 1837–1900*. MUP in association with the Victorian Education Dept, 1980. 204 p, illus.

The book shows a desirable balance of understanding between the function and the form of Victorian schools.

COX, P. AND FREELAND, J. *Rude timber buildings in Australia*. A & R, 1980. 215 p, illus.

A well-documented account of woolsheds and other rural structures and the early search for building timbers. Illustrates the advances made after powered sawmills and other machines arrived. Cox insisted that the rude buildings were closer to the condition of society.

COX, P. AND LUCAS, C. *Australian colonial architecture*. Melbourne, Lansdowne, 1978. 280 p, illus, map.

An introduction to the character of architecture in the early history of Australia based on the authors' experience with conservation work.

COX, P. AND STACEY, W. *The Australian homestead*. Melbourne, Lansdowne, 1972. 318 p, illus.

Complements the volumes on the same topic by the National Trust.

DUPAIN, M. *Georgian architecture in Australia, with some example of buildings of the post-Georgian period*. Sydney, Ure

Smith, 1963. 147 p, illus.

Dupain has provided marvellous illustrations of early nineteenth-century buildings in NSW and Tas. The essays by Morton Herman, Marjorie Barnard and Daniel Thomas are important contributions.

DUPAIN, M. *et al*, *Leslie Wilkinson, a practical idealist*. Sydney, Valadon, 1982. 128 p, illus.

A set of essays by three men who knew him, accompanied by architectural sketches by Wilkinson and photographs of his work.

ELLIS, M.H. *Francis Greenway, his life and times*. Sydney, Shepherd Press, 1949. 292 p, illus.

A biography of Greenway, Australia's first professional architect, a convict responsible for some of Sydney's first colonial buildings. Revised edition published in 1953, reprinted 1978.

FORGE, S. *Victorian splendour: Australian interior decorations, 1837–1901*. OUP, 1981. 160 p, illus.

The author has searched for the true characterisation of Victorian attitudes to decoration and applies her conclusion to Australian examples. Six houses are specifically examined and many more referred to.

FREELAND, J.M. *Architect extraordinary: the life and work of John Horbury Hunt, 1838–1904*. Melbourne, Cassell, 1970. 257 p, illus.

A biography of an influential architect during the latter years of the nineteenth century who introduced an awareness of current architectural events in the United States.

FREELAND, J.M. *Architecture in Australia: a history*. Ringwood, Vic, Penguin, 1972. 328 p, illus.

A valuable reference work and introductory text for students. First published in 1968.

FREELAND, J.M. *The Australian pub*. Melbourne, Sun Books, 1977. 192 p, illus.

A rare example of a thorough investigation of one small aspect of architecture. First published in 1966.

FREELAND, J.M. *The making of a profession: a history of the growth and work of the Architectural Institutes in Australia*. A & R in association with RAI, 1971. 297 p, illus.

Freeland was commissioned to write this case study in the growth of professionalisation.

FREEMAN, P.G. *The woolshed: a Riverina anthology*. OUP, 1980. 231 p, illus, maps.

Pays close attention to one building type as with Freeland (1977), Burchell (1980) and Sowden (1972). There are plan and section drawings as well as photographs for all examples.

HERMAN, M.E. *The architecture of Victorian Sydney*. A & R, 1964. 192 p, illus, maps.

A survey arranged in decades beginning at 1850. Many of the buildings illustrated have since been demolished. First published in 1956, this is a companion volume to his 1970 work.

HERMAN, M.E. *The Blackets: an era of Australian architecture*. A & R, 1963. 222 p, illus.

Edmund Thomas Blacket (1817–83) arrived in Sydney from England in 1842, and soon established an impressive practice in which the university buildings loomed large and splendid. The family firm remained important until the 1930s. Herman's book is almost entirely about Edmund's career and works; well informed and thorough, it is one of the small number of books devoted to Australian architects.

HERMAN, M.E. *The early Australian architects and their works*. A & R, 1970. 248 p, illus.

Valuable for its insight and illustrations for the period 1788–1850 in NSW. The author provided his own colour perspectives and line drawings. First published in 1954.



- IRVING, R. *et al*, *Fine houses of Sydney*, Sydney, Methuen, 1982. 197 p, illus.
- Nineteen houses, dating from 1823 to 1980, selected to represent high quality in various periods. Plans as well as illustrations.
- JENSEN, E. AND JENSEN, R. *Colonial architecture in South Australia: a definitive chronicle of development 1836–1890 and the social history of the times*. Adelaide, Rigby, 1980. 888 p, illus, maps.
- A large volume of information gathered from newspapers and other sources of the period. Architect Edmund Wright was the starting point for the research.
- JOHNSON, D.L. *The architecture of Walter Burley Griffin*. Melbourne, Macmillan, 1977. 163 p, illus.
- Study of an international figure who came to Australia in 1913 from the United States where he had worked with Frank Lloyd Wright. Describes how he and his wife introduced a form of modernism to this country.
- KERR, J. AND BROADBENT, J. *Gothick taste in the colony of New South Wales*. Sydney, David Ell Press in association with the Elizabeth Bay House Trust, 1980. 156 p, illus.
- The Gothic influence upon domestic and church design in the colony is made clear, and along the way interesting sources for such an account are identified.
- LEWIS, M. *Victorian primitive*. Melbourne, Greenhouse, 1977. 87 p, illus.
- The author's approach is historical, meticulous and knowledgeable, using examples from Vic which are thoroughly examined and illustrated.
- OLDHAM, R. AND OLDHAM, J. *Western heritage*. Part 2. *George Temple-Poole, architect of the golden years, 1885–1897*. UWAP, 1980. 227 p, illus, maps.
- Devoted to an individual Australian architect and important for contributing to the story of Australian public architecture. Temple-Poole's career relates to many important events in WA.
- PITT MORISON, M. AND WHITE, J. eds, *Western towns and buildings*. UWAP, 1979. 345 p, illus, maps.
- Published for the state's sesquicentenary, this book transformed a sketchily understood subject into an extensive account covering the years 1829–79.
- RAPOPORT, A. ed, *Australia as human setting: approaches to the designed environment*. A & R, 1972. 298 p, illus, maps.
- A discursive book with a variety of insights into how and why the Australian urban environment achieved its particular qualities.
- REED, T.T. *Historic churches of Australia*. Melbourne, Macmillan, 1978. 150 p, illus.
- A churchman's account of numerous prominent church buildings, the book resembles the National Trust volumes and draws on similar sources.
- ROBERTSON, E.G. *Early buildings of southern Tasmania*. Melbourne, Georgian House, 1970. 2 vols, illus.
- ROBERTSON, E.G. AND CRAIG, E.N. *Early houses of northern Tasmania: an historical and architectural survey*. Melbourne, Georgian House, 1964. 2 vols, illus, maps.
- High-standard guidebooks, with beautiful illustrations and carefully related maps. Each of the properties is provided with a brief history.
- ROBERTSON, E.G. *Ornamental cast iron in Melbourne*. Melbourne, Georgian House, 1967. 229 p, illus.
- Popular awareness of Australian decorative cast iron started with this Melbourne volume. It is complemented by one of Sydney (1962) and another which is a world survey. Revised edition of 1960 publication, *Victorian heritage: ornamental cast iron in architecture*.
- ROXBURGH, R. *Early colonial houses of New South Wales*. Sydney, Lansdowne, 1980. 603 p, illus, maps.
- Deals mainly with country homesteads, illustrated with photographs and measured drawings of their plans and significant details. First published in 1974.
- SHARLAND, M. *Stones of a century*. Hobart, Oldham, Beddome & Meredeith, 1952. xii, 74 p, illus.
- A small early book about historic buildings in Tas.
- SHAW, M.T. *Builders of Melbourne: the Cockrams and their contemporaries, 1853–1972*. Melbourne, Cypress Books, 1972. 116 p, illus.
- The business careers of leading building contractors like the Cockrams provide many clues to their times and to the way our cities became what they are.
- SMITH, B.W. AND SMITH, K. *The architectural character of Glebe, Sydney*. Sydney, University Cooperative Bookshop, 1972. 128 p, illus.
- An account of this small part of inner Sydney. The information about architectural taste and character is widely applicable in Australia.
- SMITH, R.S. *John Lee Archer, Tasmanian architect and engineer*. Hobart, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1962. xii, 70 p, illus.
- A study of an important early Australian architect.
- SOWDEN, H. ed, *Australian woolsheds*. Melbourne, Cassell, 1972. 251 p, illus.
- Includes essay by Nayne McPhee on woolsheds. Numerous examples are thoroughly illustrated, with brief notes.
- TANNER, H. ed, *Architects of Australia*. Melbourne, Macmillan, 1981. 144 p, illus.
- Collection of brief biographies; many of the architects are not yet treated anywhere else.
- TANNER, H. AND COX, P. *Restoring old Australian houses and buildings: an architectural guide*. Melbourne, Macmillan, 1975. 212 p, illus.
- This book offers one half on 'Identification' (seven main styles) and the other on 'Techniques'.
- TAYLOR, J. *An Australian identity: houses for Sydney, 1953–63*. Sydney, Dept of Architecture, University of Sydney, 1972. 80 p, illus, map.
- A little book giving the facts and significance of the so-called Sydney School of that period. A useful reference on a topic of considerable significance.
- TAYLOR, J. AND ANDREWS, J. *John Andrews: architecture as a performing art*. OUP, 1982. 176 p, illus.
- Study of John Andrews, an Australian architect of international reputation.
- THORNE, R. *Picture palace architecture in Australia and New Zealand*. Melbourne, Sun Books, 1976. 27 p, 26 l, illus.
- Thorne is an authority on this fascinating topic, and he has gathered information and illustrations for many that have gone as well as the few spectacular examples that remain.
- VERGE, W.G. *John Verge, early Australian architect: his ledger and his clients*. Sydney, Wentworth, 1962. 297 p, illus.
- The initial sourcebook for anything about Verge; the author did a special service in reproducing and annotating his ancestor's business books. (See also Broadbent, 1978.)
- WILSON, W.H. *Old colonial architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania*. Facs, Sydney, Ure Smith in association with the National Trust of Australia (NSW), 1975. 10, 150 p, illus.
- A book of beautiful etchings of colonial buildings with only a few notes on their architecture. First published in 1924.